

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR DISASTER REDUCTION, OCTOBER 13, 2010

Message by Jeremy Collymore, Executive Director Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA)

["Making Cities Resilient : My City is getting ready"](#), the theme of the two year (2010-2011) Global Campaign will be the focus of my message to the CDEMA Participating States on this International Day for Disaster Reduction, Wednesday, October 13, 2010.

Caribbean cities and urban centres are the heartbeat of the social and economic base of our individual states. 60-65 percent of the population of the CDEMA 18 Participating States resides in urban areas and this is projected to increase to over 70% in the next two decades. It is in the cities that our critical life lines are located such as; health and educational facilities, financial institutions, utilities companies, communications, sea ports and air ports, fuel storage and public and private central governing facilities. .

These cities experience and continue to experience repeated losses from hurricanes, flooding, landslides, volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. An earthquake on January 12, 2010 destroyed Port-au-Prince, Haiti and resulted in over 222,570 deaths, 300,572 injured and 2.3 million or nearly one quarter of the population displaced. Hurricane Ivan in 2004 damaged more than 90% of the housing stock in Grenada. The Volcanic eruption in Montserrat totally destroyed the capital city, Plymouth, in 1995 and resulted in the relocation of two-thirds of the population. Flooding in Georgetown, Guyana in 2005 affected an estimated 290,000 people.

Climate change scenarios and projections suggest an increase in the frequency and intensity of hazards impacts that relate to climate variability that can have far reaching implications for our water resources, ecosystems, human settlements, agricultural systems, coastal resources, tourism infrastructure and human health. There is also the increasing threat to our cities due to technological and trans boundary disasters such as the toxic sludge disaster in Hungary and the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

The reality is that the Caribbean region is comprised of a number of small islands and low-lying coastal states where the major urban areas, the associated infrastructure and key economic sectors are located in areas where natural hazards are an endemic feature of our environment.

Each new disaster leaves in its path overpowering evidence of how poor planning and investment decisions contribute to vulnerability and increase the risk of future disasters. Each new disaster sets back the development of the Caribbean region. Funds allocated for social and economic development is diverted towards relief and reconstruction in the aftermath of a disaster.

We must therefore be more aggressive in making our cities and communities disaster resilient. As a region, as individual countries, as citizens we must be unrelenting in our efforts to build more resilient societies.

All of the CDEMA Participating States have adopted and are pursuing [a Comprehensive Disaster Management \(CDM\)](#) approach to all the hazards that their countries are prone. CDM emphasizes the involvement of all sectors of society in taking action to manage and reduce the disaster risk that they face.

The time is now for us to elevate and accelerate the CDM process to sectoral planning, resource allocation and land use decisions that target our cities and urban centres.

Let us move forward with a renewed recognition of the critical need for emphasis on our urban centres.

Let us identify, evaluate and promote best practices and standards for disaster risk reduction that formally and informally exist within our community and beyond.

I urge all of our Participating States, to participate in the Global Campaign, ***“Making Cities Resilient: My (Caribbean) City is getting ready”*** as we continue to in our efforts to embrace Comprehensive Disaster Management for the building of more resilient societies.

Jeremy Collymore

For further information:

Global Campaign, “Making Cities Resilient: My City is getting ready” -

<http://www.unisdr.org/english/campaigns/campaign2010-2011/documents/campaign-kit.pdf>

Comprehensive Disaster Management Strategy and Framework

<http://www.cdema.org/CDMStrategyandProgrammeFramework2007-2012.pdf>